

CHENAR LEAVES

POEMS OF KASHMIR

by

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IN MEMORIAM.

These verses are dedicated to the memory of my father,
the late Lt.-Col. Sir Adelbert Cecil Talbot, K.C.I.E.,
who was the Resident of Kashmir from 1896 to 1900 and a
keen admirer of its beauties. During the term of his office
he was a true and practical friend to the State. He died in
December, 1920.

MURIEL A. E. BROWN.

CALCUTTA, 1921.

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CHENAR LEAVES.

Poems of Kashmir

A KASHMIR SHAWL

Rich web of woven dreams! A Kashmir shawl,
Its warp and woof of silky, pliant hair
From choice *pashmina* goats, beyond the wall
Of far Himâlaya brought, with toil and care,
Then dyed in all the subtlest hues which art
For eastern looms could cunningly devise,
And spun in threads so fine, the great world's
mart

Of patient skill can show no fairer prize.
The pattern forms methinks a mystic shape
In Jhelum's windings, or in "tree of life":
Such blended colours artists' palettes ape
Closer than weaver's shuttle plying strife.

The art is lost! The spirit of this age
In love's laborious crafts will not engage.

THE PILGRIMAGE TO AMARNATH

Mid lofty snows a mystic cavern lies .
And in its holy precincts dwells a Dove
Which sometimes to the pilgrim's longing eyes
Appears, as, filled with fervid ardent love
They mount the pathway to this sacred spot,
Their eager eyes all lit with wondrous zeal;
For blessed he, who has the happy lot
For ever his glad pilgrimage to seal
Successful in first gazing on the Dove.

In Palgam's wooded vale assembled there
The congregations vast of pilgrims rest—
A varied scene of interest most rare !
The camp is filled with stir and active zest:
A vision as of Vedic times 'twill seem
When all the world was primitive and young
And nature's worship the absorbing theme
While Vedic hymns the Hindu bards still
sung
What hymn more sweet than that unto the
Dove?

At night, the camp fires with their ruddy glow
Against the forest dark send fitful gleams,
At day, a blue smoke ever soft will blow

In whirling drifts, which holy incense seems
Above the camp, to waft the fervent prayers

Of this great multitude of faithful souls,
Transported far above all worldly cares:

And as they march in deepest union rolls
A chant from voices praising aye the Dove.

How many dream in India's sunny plains

Of hoar Himâlaya's distant, blest retreat!
And treasure all their little hard-earned gains
To bring them, humble pilgrims, to her feet:
Decrepit beggars jostling side by side

With lordly merchants, who to make amends
For sordid lives perhaps, at last decide

To join the pilgrim's pathway as it wends
Onwards and upwards, still to reach the Dove.

And here an agèd widow with a look

Of rapt devotion on her wrinkled face,
Her feeble form supported by a crook,

Seeks with the multitude to keep in pace,
She sinks exhausted, but her spirit still

Restores her trembling limbs once more to
try

The steep ascent, and resolute of will

The Dove she strives to see 'ere she may die
Her voice still whispers faint the words "the
Dove."

A high-born lady in a palanquin

Lies half disclosed, between the curtains
drawn;

Pushing close by, his face so wild and thin

A naked *fakir* presses eager on.

Strapped in a basket yonder there is seen

A dying youth, still ever upward borne,
Compelled upon another's strength to lean,

His spirit nearly leaves the body worn
Ah! will his glazing eyes behold the Dove?

And see! a group of *sadhus* halt hard by,

In saffron-tinted robes, on leopard skins,
Umbrellas all their shelter, bright of dye:

Their long and matted hair much merit wins!
And one, a consecrated vow has made

Between the hours of sunrise and sunset
Never to rest, nor speak—all over laid

With ashes, and with begging bowl will yet
Devoutly crave forgiveness from the Dove.

The foaming torrent is their lullaby:

Then with the dawn they strike their tents
and climb

The mountain path where awful fissures lie—

Gulfs yawning deep on either hand—sublime
A test for hearts! yet dauntless on they go

Until those dizzy heights they now attain
Which mark the line of everlasting snow,

Where Mahadèv eternally doth reign.
Ah! who among them first will see the Dove?

At last 'tis reached! The cave of Amarnath!

Within, a mystic frozen column lies—
Great Siva's form, engraved by nature's art
Which Hindu devotee here deifies.

By the full August moonlight in the stream
The pilgrims plunge, as frozen from the cave
It icy wends—and thus their sins redeem
As herein penitentially they lave. *

And visions came to many pilgrims here
And many vowed they'd seen the wondrous
Dove:

* * * * *

A few among them who could see more clear
Whispered with awe their vision was of
Love—

Of *All Pervading Love*.

LOTUS FLOWERS ON THE DAL LAKE

Kashmir's soul-flower! O thou most sacred
bloom

What wondrous treasure lies within thy
heart?

Deep hidden down amidst that rosy gloom

Thy petals as its guardians do their part.

*Om mani padmi hum.**

Ah! how can I describe thy beauty rare

To those who have not seen thy gracious
form?

Serene, majestic, yet pulsating there

With love thy full blown petals roseate warm.

Om mani padmi hum.

It desecration seems to pry or gaze

With curious eye upon that calyx gold,

Which tremulous yet glowing doth amaze

Us by the jewelled beauty we behold :

Om mani padmi hum.

* A Buddhist *mantra* meaning—"The Jewel of the Flower of the Lotus."

Intricate is the pattern finely wrought

By the Great Craftsman's Hand, with cunning skill

Oh! Lotus bloom thy shrine have many sought
And worship thee, and oft revere thee still.

Om mani padmi hum.

Proudly erect, though full of simple grace

Thy beauteous head is reared towards the
sun,

Flushed by thy love perhaps is thy fair face
Or joy that precious jewel to have won.

Om mani padmi hum.

The rosy dawn hath kissed thy petal's hue

And on the surface of each leaf is lain

A diamond drop of clearest crystal dew

Quicksilver beads which rolling break in
twain.

Om mani padmi hum.

Thy leaves of deep, yet tender green are
spread

In multitudes upon the Dal lake's breast—

A noble throng of leaves to form thy bed,

And on each leaf a subtle bloom doth rest.

Om mani padmi hum.

Who first with soulful vision clearly saw
The spiritual jewel here revealed?
Composed that *mantra* full of occult lore
In which the mystic secret is concealed?
Om mani padmi hum.

Surely the humble, faithful souls who find
Some solace in repeating o'er and o'er
Those magic words, grope blindly for That
Mind
Which on the Lotus flower such grace doth
pour.

Om mani padmi hum.

THE SHALIMAR BAGH

(A Mughal Garden on the Dal Lake)

O Shalimar! O Shalimar!

A rhythmic sound in thy name rings

A dreamy cadence from afar

Within those syllables which sings

To us of love and joyous days

Of Lalla Rukh! of pleasure feast!

Of fountains clear whose glitt'ring sprays

Drawn from the snows have never ceased

To cast their spell on all who gaze

Upon this handiwork of love—

Reared in Jehangir's proudest days

Homage for Nur Mahal to prove.

For his fair Queen he built these courts

With porphyry pillars smooth and black

Whose grandeur still expresses thoughts

For her that should no beauty lack.

The roses show'ring o'er these walls

Still fondly whisper love lurks here

And still he beckoning to us calls

By yon Dal's shores in fair Kashmir.

IN GULMARG

In rain and damp among the forest paths

The pine trees tall and darkly solemn loom—
Some ruddy trunks scooped out to shelt'ring
 hearths

By weary coolies shivering midst the gloom;
The grey mists closely round the mountains
 fall

And sadly cling and all is dank and drear—
When suddenly a rift breaks through the pall
Of vapour pale and rays of sun appear,
The dark cloud curtains swift asunder tear!
Stretched far below the opalescent plain
Lies smiling in its tender tints most rare,
And joyous rainbow beauty mocks the rain:—

A glimpse of Heav'n revealed! Alas! in scorn
The mists descend and I am left—forlorn.

IRIS—IN MEMORIAM

In Kashmir valleys blow

Iris

Purple and regal, or white, they show
The grave's place

And with dignified, imperial grace
Revive in spring:

Tribute

Each root,—

And love's

Gift of Life Eternal sing

Each year

So dear—

Messages of hope to sad hearts bring,

The dead

Rest nameless and unknown

More constant far than graven stone

Iris

In Kashmir valleys blow.

PANDITANIS

With graceful step, erect and slow
Adown the stone-built, broken stair
The *panditanis** daily go
And on their heads held high they bear

Bright vessels, which they stooping fill
Beneath the bridge's wooden pier:
In pools of clouded amber still
Which gurgle deep and glowing here.

Their movements of unconscious grace
Glint in the Jhelum's flowing stream
Where rich hues shimmering interlace
And in the glancing ripples gleam,

Then with their slender rounded arms
They poise the shining *lotas* high,
Or bashful, with half feigned alarms
Draw close their veils with gesture shy.

Bedecked by jewels quaint of form

In *pherans*† robed, whose soft folds show
Tints dyed by rays of sunset warm
Flame, crimson, orange, rose aglow!

With yon gay tulips they compare
Which on these grass-grown house-tops
blow:

What types for artist's brush more fair
Does all Srinagar's city know?

* *Panditanis*, wives of Pandits or educated Hindus.

† *Pherans*, the long loose robe worn by the Kashmiris, men and women alike.

THE MUGHAL GARDEN AT ACHIBAL

Thy murmuring waters seem to bless
As with a tender soft caress
All who are lulled here by their fall
In garden fair of Achibal:
And as on us they weave their spell
They seem of ancient days to tell,
And might the secrets all outpour
Of full three hundred years and more.
If you will listen close you'll hear
These fountains whisper low and clear
Of loves and hopes and fears which sigh
Echoing faint from days gone by;
Then tossing proud their waters gay
They sing to me through falling spray
Of Nur Mahal, whose heart's desire
Was to this garden to retire:
Here she would spend her happiest hours
In watching their translucent showers.
These lattice windows still remain—
How light the touch of Time hath lain!
We might behold the very scene
As gazed on by that well-loved Queen.

It is indeed a pleasure sweet
To linger in this old retreat—
Those ancient stately days recall
When elephants with *howdahs* tall
The Great Mughal, and all his court
From Delhi up to Kashmir brought:
They surely thought 'twas worth the pain
To view these gardens yet again—
The Nishat Bagh, the Shalimar
Vernag and Achibal afar—
Retreats he beautified with care
And finest taste and culture rare.
Perhaps this one of Achibal
Appeals to us the most of all—
Turf, soft as breasts of peacocks green
Chenars reflect clear in the sheen
Of waters which all copious flow
And ne'er are dry and we may go
Within this old pavilion
'Neath which the streams pellucid run,
It's ceiling painted in rich hues—
On every side enchanting views!
What can with this at all compare
E'en in this land of beauty fair?
Or where could one more fondly muse
Had we the whole wide world to choose?*

* The metre of these lines was suggested by the sound of the continuous flow of water at Achibal.

PRETSI, THE BOATMAN'S DAUGHTER

Your eyes sweet Pretsi! your soft, earnest eyes
And oval, girlish face will haunting float
Before me still—thus seated in your boat
With dusky hair, in braids Madonna-wise,
The amulet which on your bosom lies,
Those coral beads around your slender throat
With paddle poised: a most enchanting note
For artist's canvas, which he well might
prize.

The picture's in my heart! but Pretsi's shy
And with a timid grace and bashful sigh
Bends to her task, the boat is passing, yet
She turns and glances back and throws me
there
A lotus bud she'd fastened in her hair
And smiles; Ah Pretsi! would I could forget.

WATER-WAYS ON THE DAL LAKE

Alone I love to dream along
The Dal lake's willowy water-ways
And tune my heart to hear her song,
A song which varies with the days.

My boat pursues reflections clear
And 'twixt a tracery of leaves
Mountains of amethyst appear
Through filmy veils the soft air weaves.

All nature glows and throbs delight!
I lie entranced: the atmosphere
Bathed in this shining, radiant light
Is steeped in colour soft yet clear.

When suddenly with flashing flight
A brilliant streak of purest gold
Darts swift across my waking sight,
A glimpse of living joy untold!

The golden oriole, its note
Of mellow music I can hear,
As 'neath the willow boughs I float
To catch its cadence low and clear.

Still onward ever yet we glide
Through tangled brakes of whisp'ring reed
Which their shy secrets thus confide
If only we will harkening heed.

And now my *mangies** moor the boat
To this green islet's peaceful shore—
An island made of weeds to float,
On which is grown a plenteous store

Of golden melons which I see
A Kashmir beldame pluck and throw
In her *shikara*† floating free,
Then seat herself and paddling go.

With this her trophy piled on high,
In picturesque confusion bright
Of sun-kissed, glowing fruits which lie
Reflected in the ripples light.

* *Mangies*—Kashmiri boatmen.

† *Shikara*—Kashmiri country boat.

These little isles which like a dream
Float baseless on the Dal lake's breast
How like our human lives they seem—
Mere dreams which here but fleeting rest.

I must return: the setting sun
Extends the purple shadows deep
Soft drifts of smoke, the day now done
From many homesteads circling creep.

Our paddle's splash the only sound
As stealing 'neath the shade we cling
To *Takht-i-Suliman's* dark mound
While silent birds swift nest-ward wing.

A LEGEND OF THE NISHAT BAGH

(A Mughal Garden on the Dal Lake)

“ Garden of Gladness!” The name doth echo
Adown the centuries and in us wakes
A chord responsive to the art which makes
The Mughal Court far famed: for still here
blow

The same gay flowers by each carved cascade
O’er which the waters laugh in ripples clear,
As when the Emperor’s favourite and Vizier
The terraces for signs of zodiac laid.

Each cascade is a ribboned water-fall
Which undulating simulates the grace
Of plaited tress, or here perhaps we trace
The form of flowing patterned silk: the wall
Of waters made transparent by the flare
Of fairy lamps in niches ’neath its flow
Which beauteously at night display their glow
And make the envious Shah Jehan declare

The garden of Nishat himself must own,
Nor could he let a subject keep this prize,
Which was the admiration of all eyes:
And in his heart he ceaselessly made moan.

Thus Asaf Khan was—so the legend goes—
Entreated by his Emperor for this place
Or else the garden fair should lose its grace
And Asaf Khan be overwhelmed with woes.

Threat'nings in vain! for Asaf Khan remained
Still dumb; and Shah Jehan made furious
vow

He'd cut off at their source the water's flow—
Which threat he carried out, and never
deigned

To re-instate in favour Asaf Khan,
Or e'er forgiveness grant to his Vizier
Who'd thus outvied the royal gardens near
With this famed garden's still more perfect
plan.

Asaf Khan rests despondent 'neath the shade
And shortly sleeps, and seems in dreams to
hear

The sound of waters once more flowing clear
Which 'erst a paradise his garden made.
But 'tis no dream! for splashing white with
foam

The rill's live, leaping flow returns the same
And wakens him, as if the soul now came
Back to his garden's corpse, once the sad
doom •

Of arid dryness had been all removed!

Was it the work of magic? No indeed!

The only magic which the work did speed

Was love and loyalty a servant proved:

With steadfast heart he risked his very life

At all costs to restore his master's joy;

Unknown, the means the servant could employ

To move all hindrance to the water's strife.

But it was done! Soon was the Emperor told,

The culprit straightway there before him
brought,

Who trembling stood before th' assembled
Court.

What punishment was meet for act so bold?

Blows? Fine? No! *Robe of Honour* in esteem

For faithful service and henceforth the right

To him he loved to draw the water bright

For Nishat from the royal garden's stream.

A pleasing legend this, which surely rings

Of something noble which will ever last

A link with human nature in the past,

And Mughal times alive before us brings.

Still what a spell those stately gardens hold

And memories romantic oft recall

Of Kings and Queens—the fairest Nur Mahal,

Whose names live on, enshrined in their rich
mould.

NANGA PARBAT* FROM GULMARG

A thought of God! disclosed to human eyes

Deep symbol of His transcendental power,
Ethereal, yet sublime she lightly lies

A finger-post divine to Heaven doth tower.
Great Nanga Parbat! Thou must wean our souls
From aught that can defile or harm them
here,

For, if such naked purity unrolls

Before us, 'tis a heavenly message clear
And dimly we perceive what God's thoughts
are:

Thy snowy summit mingling with the skies
Floating remote o'er mundane things afar
Interprets the sweet vision to our eyes.

A dream of matter here: in God's own Mind
Thy true, eternal substance we shall find.

* Nanga Parbat means a naked mountain.

THE LEGEND OF GUPKAR HOUSE

What is the secret of the haunting charm
Which lies in this old house now desolate
And left forlorn? Some strange untoward
fate,
Perchance some cruel spell has wrought such
harm

Upon the garden fair! For pathways wild,
Neglected, yet so full of natural grace
There are, so over-grown we barely trace
Their course, with fragrant lilac sprays o'er-
piled

And iris white, death's symbols pale, ablow.
The thicket dense of scented hawthorn here
Embow'rs the tomb of some forgotten *pir**
Whose fame of old these mossy head-stones
show.

* *Pir*—Muhammadan Saint.

And on the gray and broken slabs still lie
A few *chirags** which gleam through foliage
dim,
In pious vague remembrance lit of him—
So faint they're like the upward whisp'ring sigh
Known but to God alone of some sad heart:
Each Friday night a stealthy leopard steals
Men say from mountains near and crouching
kneels
In Sabbath vigil o'er this tomb apart.
A legend strange the villagers relate
Of how a Hindu brought to Kashmir far
His English bride—years since—to this Gup-
kar:
To her the lower part did dedicate
Built western-wise, of this large rambling
house,
Above he built with oriental pride
Chambers in Indian style—not for his bride,
And other secret chambers which would rouse
Suspicion in the breast of any wife
Were she forbidden by her lord to go
Up there, or seek by any means to know
The way in which he spent half of his life.

* *Chirags*—Small native lamps.

And on the gray and broken slabs still lie
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Up there, or seek by any means to know
The way in which he spent half of his life.

* *Chirags*—Small native lamps.

In vain the brightest glories of Dal lake
Stretching beneath this terraced garden fair
Beguiled the lonely girl her fate to bear—
Mysterious fate! which caused her heart to
break!

For soon she died—and hence perchance 'tis
why
The house half-haunted seems, as if there
clings
About it yet remembrance of such things
Which my heart's closest searching will defy.

Folly perhaps! for all is smiling now
Beneath the sun which lights yon great chenars
With vivid green through these fine lattice bars,
And gay and sparkling lies the lake below.

* * * * *

A sudden chill creeps o'er my heart—of *fear*
The brightness seems all false! Beneath is
gloom.

Rustling among the shadows of yon tomb
Surely the wings of Death I softly hear.

THE PIR PANJAL RANGE FROM SRINAGAR

A mighty wave which threatening seems to
loom

Its crest in crystal foam prepared to break
And all Kashmir engulf, unto her doom!

That icy outline never may forsake
The form bestowed when it tumultuous rose:

Restrained by powers titanic who decreed
It ever should remain, poised, as it froze,
A vision of sublimity indeed!

My spirit longs to soar and penetrate

That snowy boundary range remote and pure
For there perchance lies hid far Heaven's gate
Which once attained, my restless heart will
cure.

But 'tis in vain I seek that region clear

When whisp'ring winds reply "Lo! Heav'n
is here."

MEMORIES OF GULMARG

O! for the wind in the pine-wood trees

O! for the flowery, scented breeze
In far Gulmarg! in far Gulmarg!

O! for the wealth of flowers so blue

O! for the sound of the ring-dove's coo,

O! for that earth's soft covered breast

The turf my love's foot-steps have pressed,

And all the thousand scents which rise

To subtly haunt our memories,

Scents which spring from the very grass

As o'er its velvet growth we pass
In far Gulmarg! in far Gulmarg!

O! for the babbling brook's clear flow

Dancing from Killan's heights below,

O! for the cold and gleaming snow

Which Apharwat doth proudly show,

And lights and shades which joyous play

On her grey-green slopes all through the day.

O! for the moonlight so serene
As 'thwart the marg she casts her sheen,

O! for the rainbow tinted vale
Which dream-like fades to vision pale
In far Gulmarg! in far Gulmarg!

Their distant peaks great mountains rear
Pure, shadowy guardians of Kashmir.

And now upon a dreary plain
I wounded lie in aching pain
How far Gulmarg! how far Gulmarg!

But when this pain comes to an end—
My soul released—swift may it wend

To its true home—yonder I know
Instead of Heaven,—God let me go,
To far Gulmarg! To far Gulmarg!

A FILIGREE OF GOLD AND SILVER

A shimmering, tremulous light of leaves
Seen through a haze of sunlight, when at
dawn

Is spread a sheet of golden-tinted lawn
Beneath a web of blossom which Spring
weaves:

As if the sunbeams wandering past my eaves
Had all been captured on this joyous morn,
And to repay their debt had laughing sworn
Largesse of gold, that blushing Spring
receives.

Gold, for the silver 'blossoms thus outpoured
Whose petals frail pledge us a rich reward
In Autumn's luscious fruit, e'en now foretold
By buds of peach and almond, which unfold
Their tender hopes in fresh and dainty sheen
Through faintest flush of rose and misty
green.

BIRDLIFE IN KASHMIR

True! Kashmir boasts not such a varied throng
Of songsters as are England's dear delight,
But many birds there are who nest among
Her trees and meadows and entrance our
sight;

The paradise-fly-catcher softly flits
Between the leaves with graceful flutt'ring
tail

Of purest white: restless, he never sits
Upon a bough but threads the leafy veil,

In dazzling contrast to the foliage dark,
The brilliant sunshine glinting on his plume;
His mate, a bird of sober brown I mark,
Sits peaceful near in her small nursery room.

Yon joyous bird the golden oriole—
Fairy embodiment of living gold,
In melodies so blithe pours out his soul,
And lights the Dal's dim green with colour
bold.

A tiny scarlet bird with ebon head,
And many others bright of hue are here,
Some vivid blue and others deeply red
Among the many which frequent Kashmir.

Of all the throng, the *bulbul* seems to claim
The dearest place; 'tis such a homely bird,
With such endearing ways, fearless and tame
And everywhere his cheerful note is heard.

When the Kashmiris their swift shuttles ply,
Of this loved bird they patterns quaintly
weave

Of *chashmi bulbul* or the *bulbul's* eye,
Thus make their keen appreciation live,

And deftly form a symbol intricate
Th' appraising eye of connoisseurs to please.
True art! that nature thus should indicate
Designs which these poetic craftsmen seize.

Upon the prows of many boats quite late
Towards the dusk the kingfishers will rest
And hov'ring plunge into the stream, then wait
To dive again—the fish below their quest.

Entrancing 'tis to watch their turquoise flight
With wings extended; or as motionless
They poise, with plumes of opal sheen bedight
Intent! Alert! keen vigilance express.

The hoopoe too, in fascinating crest
And wings all striped in pattern alternate
Of white and black, will take among the rest
Of Kashmir's birds a place of honour great.

Hark! how his name hoopoe will reproduce
His hollow note in quaint similitude.
Kastura's tuneful melodies induce
Memories of thrushes' songs in solitude.

'Midst haze of pale blue *Krishn** tufts there
dwell
Myriads of sky-larks by the Jhelum's shore
Which visions dear of home also compel
They here—as there—like warblings full out-
pour.

* *Krishn* is the Kashmiri name for the small blue iris, connected possibly with the Hindu god Krishna, whose characteristic colour is blue.

And higher in the uplands we may hear
 Greeting the Spring through scented pine-
 wood trees,
Faint echoes sweet—the cuckoo calling clear
 Mingling with murmurs of the mountain
 bees.

How these bird-notes associations bring
 So closely dear of English wood and lane
All those who dwell in far Kashmir in Spring
 Will realize with touch perhaps of pain.

THE RUINED TEMPLE OF MARTAND

On slope of vast and undulating plain
In solemn solitude, of noble art,
The ancient ruins of Martand remain
Built for Sun worship once. Has the true
part
Of thy prone columns faded like a dream?
Engirdled by the everlasting hills
O Temple of the Sun! His radiant beam
Illumes this broken altar, and still fills
These shattered halls at dawn with his clear
light.
Though human hands may no more loving
tend.
The Sun's pure glory is God's symbol bright,
Thus thy great destiny can never end:
.
Still eloquent of prayers, though stones decay
And forms of ancient creeds have passed
away.

“JACOB’S LADDER”*(In Gulmarg)*

In Gulmarg have I seen
Where earth and Heaven meet,
For here beneath my feet
Lies Heaven’s bluest sheen.

As if of old, men knew
Your blooms were meant to be
A link for us to see
How near to Heaven’s blue

This stony earth is still,
How God to us will send
His “Angels”—thoughts—which wend
From Heaven our minds to fill—

They gave you this dear name,
For here when you’re ablow
Is Bethel: this I know!
For “Angels” came to me .

Upon your ladders blue—

Ah! how with Love divine
My soul they close entwine
Those “ Angel-thoughts ” so true!

Perhaps too, I may climb
A little nearer God
If I your blue rungs trod
“ Ladders ” to thoughts sublime.

PERI MAHAL*(The Fairies' Palace)*

“Peri Mahal!” strange and romantic name
Bestowed by folk-lore on this ancient pile
Above the Dal lake's shore: I rest awhile
And glance above—below—each line the
same

Limned on the bosom of the lake: the fame
Of elfin deeds I've heard, of fairy guile
Luring lone wanderers here for many a mile,
Their very souls and bodies then to claim.

A breath of wind and lo! the picture's gone,
What wizard scene then have I gazed upon?
The ruin hoar remains, its sad stern brow
O'erhangs the shining lake in frowning
gloom,
Deserted—brooding lone—it's mystic doom!
I'll flee! lest spell malign befall me now.

DEODARS AND RUINED TEMPLES

(On the road to Kashmir)

Himâlaya's noble tree, great deodar!

Towering aloft in thy majestic grace
On mighty rocks, whose clefts give narrow
space

For thy strong roots—proud spread thy
branches far,

Thy name means “Powerful”* for no worm
can mar.

Thy heart's sound strength: in Hindu cult we
trace

True service for thee, while its priests will
place

Lamps on thy boughs which for God's worship
are.

Ye “Trees of God” in honour of His name
Oft planted by these mountains temples nigh
Now left gray ruins, and unknown to fame—
Where echoes faint of prayers on night-winds
sigh

Combining with your incense—deodars!
Ye point in solemn vigil to the stars.

*The deodar belongs to the cedar family. Cedar in Arabic is *kadr* which means literally “Power.”